

SEEDS OF HOPE

Holiday 2022

kansasfoodbank.org



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HUNGER UPDATES IN KANSAS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Dear Friend,

I want to take a moment to thank you personally for your partnership. As you are well aware, the past couple of years have been a true challenge. The Food Bank has had to adapt and expand our operations to accommodate an unimaginable need for food. So many people would have missed meals were it not for your support during these hard times.

As you sit down to a special meal with your loved ones this holiday season, I hope you remember the countless Kansans who are giving thanks for you and your generosity.

Your impact is illustrated in Billy’s story on the next page. Billy is one of many people who continue to be financially affected by the aftermath of the pandemic. Also meet Phyllis on page 8. Although she is a senior in need of food herself, she perpetuates your generosity by volunteering to prepare meals for others.

These are just two of so many stories we hear on a daily basis. Hope is real, alive and well here in Kansas, thanks to you. You give me and so many of your neighbors something to celebrate.

As we look toward new challenges and opportunities in the coming year, I take heart knowing friends like you are in our corner. The pandemic showed me that Kansans care deeply for one another and will step up to meet the need. Thank you for that peace of mind.

Also, we encourage you to read our special Q & A with Feeding America’s very own CEO Claire Babineaux-Fontenot on pages 4 and 5.

Please enjoy this holiday season, and again, thank you.

Happy Holidays,

Brian Walker
PRESIDENT & CEO

YOU HELP NEIGHBORS THROUGH HARD TIMES

The holidays are a special time to give thanks for all the blessings we received over the past year. But not everyone across our communities has the means to celebrate. This season can be a painful reminder of hunger for Kansans like Billy and his wife.

The couple has been continuing to struggle financially since the beginning of the pandemic when Billy lost his job as a sushi chef. Eager to earn an income, he takes any odd job. But steady work has been hard to find.

Already under stress, Billy was devastated to lose his brother unexpectedly this past year. The grief has been a significant added burden at an already difficult time.

Billy’s eyes filled with tears when he discussed his brother’s passing. But talk of melancholy soon bloomed to gratitude.

We met Billy at Table of Hope Food Pantry in Wichita. This Kansas Food Bank partner pantry is stocked in large part through your generosity, and Billy was happy to share his thanks with you.

“We appreciate this more than you know,” he said. “Thank you for your help.”

We hope you understand the significant impact you make in the lives of people who are facing hunger. Billy has hope for a brighter future because you choose to give. Thank you.

“ *We appreciate this more
than you know.* ”

Billy and his wife are thankful for your support this holiday season.



IN CONVERSATION WITH CLAIRE BABINEAUX-FONTENOT

We had the honor of hosting Feeding America’s CEO, Claire Babineaux-Fontenot at the Kansas Food Bank. She toured the food bank, meeting and speaking with our team members, volunteers and board members about how we are serving our neighbors in need. The following is a special Q&A conversation we want to share with you.

Q: Kansas Food Bank - When it comes to hunger, food insecurity, food assistance – what are the trends you’re seeing across America right now?

A: Claire Babineaux-Fontenot - We are seeing the need persist across the country. Some of our food banks, in fact, are seeing the highest demand that they’ve ever seen in their history, and that includes higher than the peak of the pandemic. As of May, our last poll showed 70% of our membership was [experiencing] either the same or higher rates of demand. So the need is definitely persisting out there.

Q: Kansas Food Bank - Are there any specific populations or geographic areas that are currently experiencing greater hardships or challenges?

A: Claire Babineaux-Fontenot - The reality of food insecurity is that even though it’s so important that we care equally about every single person who experiences food insecurity, not everybody experiences it in the same way. There are definitely communities who are harder hit. One area is in terms of people of color. Communities of Color are inordinately more likely to be food insecure than the white population is. The other area where there is

inordinate need is in certain pockets of rural America. That’s something that I know this food bank knows very, very well. We have formerly thriving small towns across the country that have been decimated. As a result, there are no jobs, there are no grocery stores, and there are people who are really struggling to try to find the nutrition that they need to sustain themselves and their families.

Q: Kansas Food Bank - Okay, so what do you expect to see in terms of hunger and food assistance in America over the next 3, to 5, to 10 years?

A: Claire Babineaux-Fontenot - So earlier this year, I spoke to our membership for the first time in person since the pandemic started. And at that time, I talked about some work that we had done: we had reached out to some members; we talked to people experiencing food insecurity; we talked to donors and to policy makers. And from those conversations emerged a bold aspiration for our whole country. So the real question that was asked was, ‘What if we decided as a nation that food insecurity were unacceptable? What could we do? What could we achieve by the end of the decade?’ And we determined together, that by the end of the decade, we could cut food insecurity rates in half. And I’m confident that we can do it.

Q: Kansas Food Bank - Okay, last question. How would you encourage people or individuals to support the cause of hunger relief in their own communities?

A: Claire Babineaux-Fontenot - I like to talk about how people can support across three areas: We need food, we need funds, and we need friends. If in your community, you have enough food to share, then we encourage you to reach out to your local pantries. The

Kansas Food Bank has so many partners all across the state of Kansas. So, you can donate food. You could donate funds. The reality is because of our buying power, we actually can do more with your dollar than you can. So we encourage you to provide funds if you can.

And then the third one is we need friends – friends who come and volunteer at their food banks. Right now, the vast majority of volunteers are over 65. While it’s important for our seniors to continue to do the types of work that I hear from them directly give their lives so much purpose...we also ask for the youth of this country to step up and volunteer as well and to pick up part of that load. The other side of friends that we ask for is that you use your voices. So you talk to policymakers and you tell them this issue matters. Let’s put aside all of the stuff that divides us and support the things that are going to make sure that communities across this nation will thrive.



WE ARE SO GRATEFUL FOR WALTER'S COMMITMENT

“You never truly understand what our neighbors are going through until you start giving back and pay attention to your surroundings,” Walter says.

On his first visit to the Kansas Food Bank, Walter remembers feeling both impressed by the scope of the operation and depressed by the need for food here in Kansas, which he admits he never noticed. In addition to spending time with his wife of 43 years, he knew he wanted to dedicate his free time in retirement to volunteering.

At 85, most folks Walter’s age spend their golden years enjoying some well-earned rest and relaxation. But Walter does not operate that way. He was a busy young boy who started working as a salesman in high school. Walter continued in the field and eventually owned a sales business with his partner.

“I got to travel and meet some great people along the way,” he remembers with a smile.

When he finally retired eight years ago at age 77, Walter wanted to stay active. He decided to come in to sort and pack food weekly. After taking a break from volunteering during the pandemic to protect his and his wife’s health, he is considering increasing his commitment.

To anyone who might want to join the fight against hunger in Kansas, Walter emphasizes the importance of “understand[ing] that people are extremely vulnerable



Walter keeps busy giving his time at the Kansas Food Bank.

and could benefit from your compassion and the choice of giving.”

Our sincere thanks to Walter for his effort to give back. Your heart and hard work are an inspiration!

If you'd like to volunteer at the Kansas Food Bank, contact us at volunteer@kansasfoodbank.org.



You're bringing hope to neighbors like James.

JAMES AND HIS MOTHER GIVE THANKS FOR YOU

James is a devoted son. He does his best to care for his 94-year-old mother, who lives with him. In fact, he worked two jobs — in sterile processing at St. Francis Hospital and as a cashier at Lowe’s — to provide for their needs.

But lately, finances have been tight. James has lymphedema, and his symptoms of this incurable condition became so severe he had to stop working. He must now rely on limited disability assistance to cover all his and his mom’s expenses.

James, along with countless fellow Kansans, is hit especially hard during these colder months when a large portion of fixed incomes must go toward utility bills. Fortunately, he knew where to turn.

Dear Neighbor Ministries, a Kansas Food Bank Partner Agency near his home, provides several services for neighbors in southeast Wichita. James had been visiting the organization for help with taxes when he learned about its food pantry.

The pantry offers a variety of staple groceries to help community members fill their tables. James is truly grateful for friends like you, who help make this resource available.

“The extending of your hand shows your heart,” James says with gratitude. “That one gesture can save a life.”

Your support makes a difference for countless people who might otherwise have less hope. Thank you for changing lives!

PHYLLIS PAYS IT FORWARD

When you give, you do more than fill empty plates and pantries. You fuel the efforts of people who pay your caring support forward. People like Phyllis.

Phyllis retired five years ago from her job as an activity director at a nursing home. Since then, she has dedicated her free time to volunteering. Phyllis wants to help improve life in her Fort Scott community. She helps prepare meals at one of the local churches that provides free community meals to anyone on Wednesday evenings.

Her inspiration comes not just from a personal belief in helping others, but also from caring folks like you.

“God bless the people who donate their time and money,” Phyllis says. “So many people need this assistance.”

She has experienced your generosity firsthand. Phyllis relies on Social Security and living with a fixed income is tough. Her monthly checks only go so far. And being a giving person and a caring mother, Phyllis also tries her best to help her son, Dewayne, who has a disability.

Affording bills is especially difficult during the winter months when her gas bill increases — but her income stays the same.

Because you choose to give, Phyllis can access the food she needs to thrive at her local Fort Scott senior center, where she receives a monthly food box from the Kansas Food Bank. She is truly grateful for your support.

“I wish I could do more personally, but I’m thankful this place is here,” Phyllis says.



Phyllis shares a grateful smile.



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